

## Herbert Bloch and the new *CIL* XV.1

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Probably every editor of Roman brickstamps has strongly felt the need for a new edition of H. Dressel's masterpiece, now more than 100 years old.<sup>1</sup> If this is achieved, the credit will largely go to one who, as a very young man 60 years ago, revolutionized the study of brickstamps, and 10 years later published first a *Supplement* and then the *Indices* to *CIL* XV.1.<sup>2</sup> Well-known changes in his circumstances hindered what would have been — and was planned to be — the logical conclusion of those studies: the new edition that Bloch and G. Gatti already in 1937 planned to publish in *Inscriptiones Italiae*.<sup>3</sup>

With his *I bolli laterizi e la storia edilizia romana*<sup>4</sup> Bloch demonstrated what information can be drawn from stamps when seen in their archaeological and historical context. The subtitle, *Contributi all'archeologia e alla storia romana*, is a declaration of a program that he pursued in all his later research on brickstamps. The impact of that work has been such that it is now nearly inconceivable that Bloch had to dedicate so much space to the demolition of chronologies which resulted from research methods that did not take the stamps into account (e.g., E. Van Deman's chronology of the Atrium Vestae<sup>5</sup>), or interpretations that, though historically invalid (e.g., Cozzo<sup>6</sup>), still had the power to undermine confidence in what Bloch proved to be most important historical documents.

The fields of research that have profited from his use of those documents are many, from the prosopography of landowners to the history of *offinatores* and *figlinae*,<sup>7</sup> from onomastic

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- 1 *CIL* XV.1 was published in 1891 (repr. 1966), with the subtitle *Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae. Instrumentum domesticum*.
  - 2 *Supplement to Volume XV 1 of the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum including complete indices to the Roman brickstamps* was published as a monograph in 1949 (Cambridge, MA), re-uniting the *Supplement* and the *Indices* first presented in vols. 56/57 (1947) and 58/59 (1948) of *HSCP*.
  - 3 Cf. *Supplement* (supra n.2) 3: "I have not given up hope of obtaining sometime the opportunity of making this edition in close connection with the topographical and historical problems involved."
  - 4 First published as a monograph in Rome in 1948, comprising three long articles from *BCom* 64 (1936) 141-255; 65 (1937) 83-191; 66 (1938) 61-221, and the "Indici analitici" which formed an "aggiunta" of vol. 71 (1943-45).
  - 5 In the late 19th c., the authoritative R. Lanciani expressed strongly negative views about the utility of brickstamps for dating buildings. Van Deman, like many others, simply ignored them. Cf. Bloch, *ibid.* 8-10 on Lanciani *contra* H. Jordan and Dressel, and *ibid.* 67-79 for a response to E. B. Van Deman, *The Atrium Vestae* (Washington D.C. 1909).
  - 6 Bloch, *ibid.* 14-26; G. Cozzo, *Una industria laterizia nella Roma imperiale: la corporazione dei figuli ed i bolli doliari* (MemLinc ser. VI, vol. 5.4, 1936).
  - 7 If the vitality of innovative research can be measured through its afterlife, as a point of reference, and in generating new research, then the first of Bloch's many *magna opera* should be valued at the highest level. Bloch's ideas and interpretations were the starting point for most of the research conducted by members of the Finnish Institute at Rome — which does not mean that they necessarily agree with Bloch or each other. Cf. T. Helen, *Organization of Roman brick production in the first and second centuries A.D. An interpretation of Roman brick stamps* (*ActaIRF* 9.1, 1977); P. Setälä, *Private domini in Roman brick stamps of the Empire. A historical and prosopographical study of landowners in the district of Rome* (*ActaIRF* 9.2, 1977); M. Steinby, "La cronologia delle figlinae doliari dalla fine dell'età repubblicana all'inizio del III secolo," *BCom* 84 (1978-79) 1-134.  
Since Bloch made the evidence available through the *Indices*, brickstamps have increasingly been taken into account in prosopographical research (see also his "Consules suffecti on Roman brickstamps," *CP* 39 [1944] 254 f.), occasionally generating impossible genealogies based on incorrect datings and readings of ill-documented stamps; cf., e.g., *PIR* I 666 on Iulia Dyna[rcha], whose name really reads Iulia Dynamis, with comment in Steinby, *ibid.* 75; Setälä's book testifies amply to the pitfalls in the field.